

Hello everyone

When Carolyn approached me to deliver this lecture on leadership at any level, at first I was thrilled with excitement that someone would be interested in what I have to say about leadership but I quickly realized I had never delivered a 45 minute lecture online before and I suddenly found myself out of my comfort zone. I had two choices; one was to give up and tell Carolyn that I was far too busy to do it or I could be **BRAVE**, take up the offer and show that I am a leader in my role as a Manager but also in my chosen career path as a librarian. I have a passion for librarianship and to share that passion with LIS students, the future graduates who will be working in our libraries. It was too good an opportunity to pass up.

As far as I am concerned, anyone can be a leader and you cannot be a leader without people. A leader leads a group of followers. So how does a leader get these followers?

Today, I will address the characteristics of leaders I have discovered in my teams.

Throughout this lecture, I will try to demonstrate the importance of having good leaders at different levels of the organization. These leaders have the ability to be persuasive not dominating, they are inclusive, encouraging and energizing. They have a good working relationship with their colleagues and they set positive examples. Leaders have a clear vision and have the ability to influence others to share and work towards that vision as a collective.

### **Who am I?**

Firstly I would like to start by telling you a little bit about myself.

My name is Ghylene Palmer and I am currently the Manager, Library Client Services at Murdoch University which means I mainly look after front of house services – I lead three teams:

The Enquiry and Lending Services team which comprises of a Senior Librarian, 8 library officers and 12 casual library assistants.

The Reference and Information Services Librarian team (also known as the Subject Librarians team) which includes 2 Senior Librarians, a team of 10 librarians and 8 casual law students who assist with law reference queries.

The Research Repository team consists of a Senior Librarian, a part time librarian and a full time library officer.

Individually they are not very big teams but altogether there are many roles to fulfill and many tasks to get through each day in order to provide excellent client services for our University's community and one Manager cannot be in all places at once so I rely heavily on my direct reports - I have 4 direct reports being my Senior Librarians. They are great team leaders and make my job a lot easier. When one team leader is away, it's like having a flat tyre, you can keep driving but you won't get very far so you need to fix or replace that tyre.

A leader is only as good as his or her team – I cannot reiterate this enough. Without the support and strong leadership skills of my Senior Librarians and my staff within my teams, I would struggle to be

an effective leader. I always feel the best leader is someone who gives their team the big picture so we all know what we are working towards. Sharing a common goal can bring a team together.

Each team leader has their own leadership style and to provide you with examples, I will focus on three different approaches to leadership.

**Team Leader 1** has years of experience and knowledge in subject support, has a **calming** presence and attitude and is **flexible and adaptable** - these characteristics have enabled her to gain her team's trust as well as mine. When Team Leader 1 is placed in a situation where she needs to convince her team to accept a new directive irrespective of whether they agree with it or not, she has all the right communication skills and uses these skills to bring them on board. Team Leader 1 also has no issues **challenging** my decisions and I appreciate this because I am not perfect, I don't have all the answers. I make the best decision based on the information I have. I have to be **willing to listen and embrace the challenge** she provides me with so as to make a more informed decision.

**Team Leader 2** has worked at Murdoch for about 15 years and has held many roles and is now able to use her experience and acquired skills. She knows a lot about the history behind past decisions made which have not been recorded and she is willing to share this with others and record them for the future. She is flexible and adaptable but her outstanding characteristic as a leader is to constantly **focus on team's best interests and needs**. She will always find ways to improve the simplest of tasks so as to make life easier for her team. She does not wait for a problem to arise before trying to fix it. She is proactive and finds ways to improve workflow processes. Her team can clearly see she holds their best interest at heart and she gains their **trust** in this way.

**Team Leader 3** is new to her role as Senior Librarian and although she has had many years of experience as a librarian, she has not had much experience as a team leader. However, she has been a leader within her team and has the respect of her colleagues. This particular team leader is all about innovation and full of energy. She will add a new dimension through research online and via different forms of media to any project you throw her way. She uses a positive and engaging process to enthuse her team. She is also very **dedicated, flexible and adaptable**.

I have just shared with you 3 examples of great team leaders. But can you lead a team without being a team leader? Of course you can! A great example of this is one of my Subject Librarians who works part time and is only with us 3 days a week and yet she has the utmost respect of her peers. She is very influential and others turn to her for guidance. They turn to her because not only is she knowledgeable but she is willing to share her knowledge with the rest of the team, she inspires the other team members and has their trust. She provides them with support and leads by example and that is why they are willing to follow her. But beware because that kind of leader in my team can also be detrimental to my role as a manager if she happens to disagree with me. I have to make sure that I gain her support before she is able to influence others. This Subject Librarian has been at Murdoch for a number of years but she has not stagnated, she has taken up new opportunities as they have come up and she has adopted new strategies to the way in which she delivers her Information Literacy and Research support to our clients. Our academics can be quite reluctant to change but with her positive demeanour, enthusiasm and hard work, she has gained their **trust**. Not only is she flexible and adaptable but she has encouraged her academics to also show that level of flexibility and adaptability.

**You will have noticed a theme emerging from my examples: flexibility, adaptability and trust!**

These are the most obvious qualities that spring to mind when I think about my team leaders.

As I mentioned earlier, a leader can be anybody. For my next example, I would like to use one of my library officers, who works in our lending services area. She is charismatic and is very approachable so the library officers and the library assistants will flock to her for leadership, guidance and direction when they are unsure of how to proceed especially when dealing with frustrated clients. This library officer is obviously well skilled in her area and this gives her credibility.

And as I have said before, leaders need followers so you cannot have a group of leaders on the one team. You need some people to be happy to follow someone else's lead or direction. For these followers to be supportive, they too have to show **flexibility and adaptability** because they may not always want to follow but are able to be persuaded to follow.

One last example from my team is one of our law librarians who only graduated in 2013 and who joined our team in 2014. She is approachable and dedicated to her subject and she is always happy to help or go above and beyond what is required of her. Her ability to consider different points of view and her willingness to listen have enabled her to break through a generation gap and as a result, she has created opportunities for herself through the Australian Law Library Association who have asked her to represent them at a conference in Canada. Her "can do" attitude is one of her best attributes as a leader within our team and within the Association.

**So what are the qualities of a good leader?**

Someone who is encouraging, someone who recognizes other people's efforts, someone who supports their team. In an organization it's someone who provides stimulating work for the team, and focuses on their team's interests and needs, someone who inspires, who shows high levels of integrity, someone with clear goals and vision, who leads by example, and has very clear communication skills and someone who expects the best but learns from mistakes and allows for mistakes to be made.

And this leads me to my next point - A manager has to be a leader but a leader does not have to be a manager.

**How about my personal experience?**

From my own personal experience, I have demonstrated leadership skills throughout my work life as well as personal life.

I am always keen on furthering my education and I like to think that through me leading by example, I have influenced some of my friends to also pursue some form of study and that I am showing my kids that no matter what age, you can always study.

I started off doing my Arts degree majoring in European languages, and well we all know that wasn't going to give me a well-paying job in Perth but I don't regret my Arts degree whatsoever as it gave me a good foundation and quite a few scholarship opportunities to study in Tuscany. Then after working in a library as a library officer, I decided to do my librarian studies and soon after, working as a librarian was paying the bills. Life happened I had two children and after a few years playing full

time mum, I came back to work full time. I was given an opportunity to act in my current role which I have done for 2 years and was recently offered my permanency. Over the past year, I didn't just want to do my job and learn on the job, I wanted to gain more skills on how to be a good manager so I applied for a Higher Education Learning Management Scholarship offered to staff at Murdoch. This HELM scholarship is the start of an MBA. I completed it and rekindled my love of study and am currently enrolled in my MBA. As a working mother, let's just say it will take me many years to complete but I am learning so much already that I think it is a worthwhile investment into my career.

Doing units like Organizational Behaviour and Management or Strategic Decision making are all helping me become a better leader for my team.

I lead my children everyday so they can be the best possible version of themselves. Actually I think having kids has helped me become a good leader – kids know how to push boundaries and if you do not have the skills to guide them in the right direction, they end up running rings around you. Kids have taught me patience – that's also an important trait of a good leader.

Another aspect of my career I would like to mention is my commitment to the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA). ALIA is full of great leaders and by becoming a member, you could access these leaders. You could even approach them to be your mentors. I became a member of our ALIAWest Committee years ago, and through the professional development opportunities, I have met and been guided by some amazing librarians and I strongly believe they have assisted me in establishing my career path. As a member of the committee, I have been leading others by planning and organizing events or using social media to promote what ALIA is doing in the West so as to build a bigger community of library professionals here in Western Australia.

**Some of my favourite leaders include:**

Oprah – Who doesn't want to be Oprah? Oprah recommends a book and over a million copies are sold worldwide – she has earned people's trust - she leads by example, she is relatable and she has a lot of empathy and integrity

Richard Branson – he has charisma, he is likeable, he is approachable and he is a doer and he too is relatable. He is a people person. He is always in the public eye in the media doing and showing people that he is human and he happens to be good looking as well – that always helps of course.

In order to be a great leader, you need these attributes: integrity, empathy and charm. (IN JEST)  
Now have a think - does Tony Abbott have these attributes? Does he have charm? Does he positively influence others? Now that's just me being cheeky. I couldn't resist mentioning our very own Prime Minister who is

**Some of my favourite library leaders include:**

Sinikka Sipilä – IFLA President 2013 – 2015

Ingrid Parent – IFLA Past President 2011 – 2013

For those of you who don't know – IFLA stands for The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions and it is the leading international body representing the interests of

library and information services and their users. It is the global voice of the library and information profession.

I was fortunate enough to witness these two ladies deliver the opening speeches at the Singapore and Lyon World Library and Information Congress in 2013 and 2014. Let's just say I am definitely a follower of theirs!

For those of you who are interested, I have included the links so you can read these speeches in your own time.

<http://conference.ifla.org/past-express/2013/node/5953.html>

<http://conference.ifla.org/past-wlic/2014/ifla80/node/551.html>

If you want to be in complete awe of some of the world's greatest library leaders then I suggest you attend an IFLA conference or more locally an ALIA conference. IFLA does amazing work for our industry worldwide and witnessing it first-hand can be highly motivating and inspirational.

**As a new graduate applying for jobs, you will often face the selection criteria – how did you demonstrate leadership skills?**

As a new graduate you may not have a lot of examples from work experiences to draw upon but you can certainly illustrate your leadership experience and potential. If you have organized a social event or activity, you could show that there were several dilemmas along the way which needed your quick decision making skills – how did you take the lead and what did you do to ensure things went smoothly and what was the result?

You may be a parent who organizes children, family activities, trips and outings which all require strong leadership skills. The important thing is to demonstrate that with this experience you had to display qualities such as initiative, and the ability to guide and motivate others.

**A very recent example of leadership at any level which I would like to share with you:**

One of my staff sent around a personality test called "16 personalities" to a couple of her peers in the office then started keeping a spreadsheet of everyone's results and suddenly the personalities test was being sent to everyone in the library and everyone was sending their results through to her. She obtained followers and she was leading them and it spiked a whole new level of interest within our workplace and it turned a boring Monday afternoon into a feisty discussion about what personality type we all were.

The 16 personalities test is free, takes about 12 minutes online and I have included the link for you.

<http://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test>

It helps you to be aware of what other personalities exist in your team and that knowledge is priceless on how you behave towards others. It will help you determine how to work with them and how to guide, motivate or influence them. We found our teams are comprised of at least 12 of those personalities and that's great news. It means we've had an effective recruitment process over the

years. Whether it was intentional or not, we won't know but we know that our team works well together.

Perhaps everyone in your class could take the test and you could use that information on the different personalities in your class to determine which group you would like to collaborate with for your next group assessment.

You can't have a group of 4 commanders or they will rip each other to shreds before you hand in the assignment. You can't have a group of 4 entertainers or you will never get the assignment completed on time.

### **Other qualities of a good leader that I have not yet mentioned.**

- **Honesty** – honesty is very important especially if you are part of a team. I guess my example of a good honest human being would be Pope Francis? Well at least one would hope the Pope is honest.
- **Bravery** - A good leader needs to be brave – my example for bravery would be William Wallace from Braveheart – he didn't just stand back and let the others fight – he got right in there and fought with the best of them. Another quick example would be ME – I was brave to do this lecture online. Goes to show that if I can do it, anyone can.
- **Passion** – A good leader has passion for their goal or passion for what drives them – I could name a number of people here – all the Masterchef cooks. Matt Preston, a food critic who is passionate about food, found his niche with Masterchef and now has thousands of followers and how clever is he to have tapped into his followers' needs - they are so interested in his cravats, he has now made the cravat his signature marketing strategy. He wears the most radical colours and prints because he knows that will bring him more followers.
- **Eager to learn** – a good leader never stops learning or find ways to improve who they are and who they can be as a person. Stephen Fry is a fantastic example of continuously wanting to learn whether it's new gadgets or new cultures ... he wants to learn everything.
- **Ability to think on your feet** – a good leader is someone who can provide a convincing answer if placed on the spot even if that answer is: I do not know but I will find out for you. Politicians usually demonstrate this quite easily – perhaps not our current Prime Minister and I apologise for picking on him but he is an easy target. Bob Hawke is amazing at thinking on his feet.
- **Humility** – a good leader is humble, listens to others and is open to criticism. A humble person is selfless and will think about putting other people's interests before their own – Mahatma Ghandi would be my example of a humble man.
- **Empowerment** – A good leader empowers others to lead – I'll use Oprah for as my example – I think Oprah needs to start paying me for promoting her so much. I am a huge fan of hers and all I wanted for a long time was to be a guest on her show – thank goodness she no longer has the Oprah Show so I have an excuse. But yes Oprah empowers her followers and helps them make decisions about their weight or their future etc ... she empowered Dr Phil to start his own show and Dr Oz and both of them are doing brilliantly because of her endorsement and empowerment.

Even in the process of writing my thoughts about leadership for this lecture, I didn't do it all on my own. I sought feedback from my husband, my friends, my colleagues at work and my entire personal learning network. I had to do something new and something terrifying for me so everyone was going to hear about it until it's done.

Listening and being open to criticism is a great skill to have not only as a leader but as a general lifelong skill. Especially when you are out of your comfort zone, you need all the help you can get. Do not be afraid to ask for help or when you do not know something, just ask.

And I still think above all else, a successful leader demonstrates HONESTY and INTEGRITY – those are essential skills of an EFFECTIVE LEADER.

And to finish up I would like to play you this video which explains leadership at any level really well. I am not sure whether technology will allow me to make this work but I've included the link in the presentation so you can always go to YouTube to watch it.

#### **Leadership video**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PUVyixT6F0>